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LIS 626, Assignment 4

Underground Railroad RAFT Lesson Plan

Social Studies Grade 4

**Objectives**

This lesson applies to Social Studies Standard 1. Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York. This lesson will deepen their understanding of this key idea:

* know the roots of American culture, its development from many traditions, and the ways many people from a variety of groups and backgrounds played a role in creating it

This lesson will also teach these information literacy skills:

* how to follow an inquiry process
* how to connect existing knowledge to new information
* how to formulate questions about a topic
* how to predict answers to questions based on background knowledge
* how to select appropriate sources
* how to select important information
* how to use technology to access information

**Standards**

Students will be split up into groups of four and assigned a role associated with the Underground Railroad. Each group will also be assigned a message to communicate, the audience the message should be addressed to, and the format of communication. Students will be told to keep in mind what they already know about the political and social climate in the United States during this time in history while working on their assignment. The library media specialist will instruct each group to work together to compile a list of questions that, if answered, will provide all the information they need to complete the assignment. The library media specialist will then provide each group with appropriate resources. Some groups will be using websites, while others will be reading books, and still another studying an atlas. The students will be encouraged to take notes as they research together and answer all of their questions. When their research is completed, the students will get to work on their task. When each group has completed their task, they will present it to their classmates so the entire group will gain broader knowledge about the Underground Railroad and its role in American history.

**Anticipatory Set**

“You are a slave. Your body, your time, your very breath belong to a farmer in 1850s Maryland. Six long days a week you tend his fields and make him rich. You have never tasted freedom. You never expect to. And yet… your soul lights up when you hear whispers of attempted escape. Freedom means a hard, dangerous trek. Do you try it? Choose either ‘Yes, I want to go’ or ‘No, I’ll stay here.’”

So beginsthe students’ virtual experience as a runaway slave on the Underground Railroad, courtesy of National Geographic’s ingenious site, <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad/>. For this anticipatory set, each group will gather together around a computer and take turns choosing what to do next on their route to freedom. During this exercise, the library media specialist will encourage the students to consider what their existing knowledge is about the circumstances in the United States at the time and what dangers the runaway slave faces while making choices.

**Teaching Input**

The library media specialist will provide the resources needed for students, aid them in crafting their questions, and guide them in their note taking as they research.

**Teaching: Modeling**

The library media specialist will present an additional example of a completed RAFT assignment with the Underground Railroad theme to model a successful completion of the task. This task will feature the role of a conductor, audience of runaway slaves, and format of a song. The topic will be: you are a conductor trying to guide a group of runaway slaves to freedom. They are weary and losing hope on the journey. Compose a song to lift their spirits and remind them of what they’re escaping and what freedom means.

**Teaching: Checking for Understanding**

The library media specialist will check for understanding by making sure each group has constructed questions that will lead to the information they are seeking. As the groups use the provided resources, the library media specialist will check for understanding, good note taking and progress in answering their questions.

**Guided Practice**

When work on the written task is underway, the library media specialist will walk around the room checking to ascertain that each group is working together, all members of the group are contributing, and that the tasks are progressing in a timely manner.

**Closure**

To conclude this lesson, the library media specialist will display two powerful images side by side on the smart board. The first is an image of a slave in bondage with the caption, “Am I not a man and a

brother?” found at <http://questgarden.com/55/57/5/071116103830/images/slavery.jpg>.

The second is a photograph taken of President Barack Obama at his inauguration found at <http://www.aframnews.com/html/interspire/content_images/1/barack_obama_inauguration-1.jpg>.

**Independent Practice**

After viewing the images on the smart board, the library media specialist will encourage the students to reflect on the two images and how life has changed for people of color in America. The students will be encouraged to write a journal entry at home on their reflections about the pictures and how the Underground Railroad played a part in creating change in America.

**Materials**

5 Computers with internet access

Paper, pencils, crayons, markers, construction paper

Smart Board

Books on the Underground Railroad

Atlas

**Duration**

2 lesson periods

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Role | Audience | Format | Topic |
| Harriet Tubman | Slaves | Map | Sketch a map showing slaves how to escape through New York to Canada. Include places where there’s running water. |
| Stationmaster | A Friend | Letter | Write a letter urging a friend living in another part of New York to become a stationmaster despite the risk of being arrested. |
| Conductor | Stationmasters and Slaves | List of Codes | Devise a list of secret codes for slaves and conductors to use to communicate without being caught by bounty hunters. |
| Runaway Slave | Self | Journal Entry | You’ve been taken in by a stationmaster. Write a journal entry describing your fears when approaching the house and trusting in a stranger for refuge. |
| Slave Holder | Bounty Hunters | Wanted Poster | Ten of your slaves have just escaped. Create a wanted poster promising a reward to the bounty hunter who finds them. |